



Kentucky Farmers Go Online for New Farming and Business Options

From: Center for Information Technology Enterprise, Inc.

The Kentucky Agricultural Development Board approved a grant in the amount of \$48,750 to the Center for Information Technology Enterprise, Inc. (CITE) to develop the business architecture, the conceptual development and the financial model for the Rural e-Learning Agricultural Program (REAP). REAP is a project proposal that could ultimately bring computers, high-speed Internet access and online learning to as many as 45,000 Kentucky tobacco farm families.

"This initial commitment is an innovative step by the Agricultural Development Board to fund the conceptual development of REAP, a program utilizing the Web-based technologies that will increase net farm income and affect tobacco farmers, tobacco-impacted communities and agriculture across the Commonwealth by adding value through e-learning and providing a Web 'super site'," said Sam Lawson, member of the Kentucky Agricultural Development Board.



The Kentucky Legislature has made an historic effort to diversify Kentucky's agriculture community away from tobacco production while revitalizing the farm economy by investing 50% of Kentucky's Master Settlement Agreement into the Kentucky Agricultural Development Fund. To date, Kentucky has invested over \$98 million in an array of county, regional, and state projects designed to increase net farm income and create sustainable new farm-based business enterprises.

"REAP will network tobacco growers with colleges and vocational schools, potential customers, agribusiness and others in a statewide public/private partnership," said John Higgins, Director of the e-Business Strategy Group at CITE and REAP Program Manager.

"REAP will involve industry, government and higher education all coming to the table to support the initiative," said Dr. Linda Johnson, President of

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